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# THE AMERICAN LEGION

Vol. 147, No. 4

The Magazine for a Strong America

OCTOBER 1999

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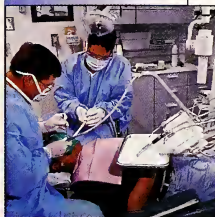
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Tom Stratman photo

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.7 million members. These wartime veterans, working through nearly 15,000 community-level Posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youths.



8



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National Commander **Alan G. Lance**

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief **Dick McNally**

Editor **John B. Raughter**

Art Director **Simon Smith**

Publication Design **Caron M. Morales**

**Editorial**

Contributing Editor **Kathy W. Farris**

Assistant Editor **Steve Brown**

Assistant Editor **Layne Cameron**

Assistant Editor **Ron Hyink**

Assistant Editor **Peter B. Rose**

Editorial Administrator **Patricia Marschand**

General Administrator **Robyn Black**

General Administrator **Robin Bowman**

Editorial Intern **Kristen Shupe**

**Production**

Production Manager **Jon Reynolds**

Production Assistant **Mary Magee**

**Advertising**

Advertising Manager **Diane Andretti**

Advertising Assistant **Cathy Frakes**

Advertising Assistant **Laura Feller**

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P.O. Box 7068

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**Publisher's Representatives**

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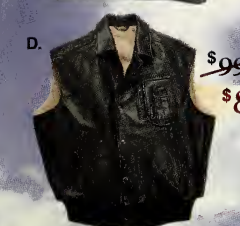
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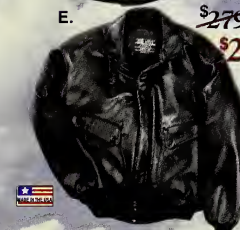
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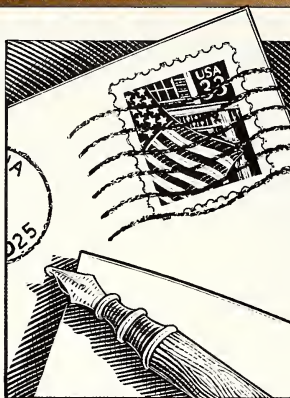
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## VA Gone South

I WAS GLAD to read National Commander Butch Miller's wonderful editorial in May.

I'm 100 percent disabled (Vietnam era) and when I was a young man my experiences with the VA system were wonderful. Dedicated people, great care and the latest technology were prevalent.

I was ill recently and had to use the facilities available in Pensacola, Fla. They've gone way south! I couldn't figure out what has happened to a once-great health-care system. Your timely article in the *Legion Magazine* has explained in detail what happened.

I, for one, am enraged and writing every elected official I can!

— John P. Emarine, Pensacola, Fla.

## Service, Please

MY CURIOSITY overwhelms me regarding the requirements for medical service for a veteran within the VA hospital system.

There are exceptions, of course, but generally a veteran is subject to means-testing before he is admitted to the system for service while it appears that our politicians and their families enjoy medical care at our finest VA facilities.

Presently, this is not a problem for me because I have always been fortunate enough to have full medical insurance coverage. But there are probably other veterans who prefer the VA system and can provide insurance to pay for services. Why are these veterans refused service and why must any veteran be means-tested as a requirement?

— J.B. Keaton, Big Spring, Texas

## Doctored Results

THANKS FOR your reports on the Army's Persian Gulf War Health Center. As a physician, I've cared for more than 600 Persian Gulf veterans since Desert Storm in 1991. Many independent professionals with extensive clinical experience like myself remain concerned that government officials still do not appreciate unique physical or medical abnormalities seen in ailing Persian Gulf veterans. At least 10 percent of Gulf veterans developed antibodies or abnormal blood tests to new diseases like viscerotropic leishmaniasis, acquired from sandflies in the Arabian desert. Independent physicians remain concerned about emerging, unknown desert infections and the effects of biological and chemical warfare among today's surviving but ailing Persian Gulf veterans.

The "doctors" in charge of the Defense Department's program are not at all medical specialists. The DoD's Special Assistant in charge of

Gulf Illnesses, Dr. Bernard Rostker, has no medical background but a Ph.D. in economics. The Walter Reed Army Hospital Gulf War Health Center is directed by an M.D. psychiatrist, Dr. Charles Engel, who, in conjunction with the National Security Council, focuses on post-combat fatigue and post-traumatic stress disorders. He is not interested in medical diseases or clinical or laboratory abnormalities seen in Gulf War veterans.

Independent, unbiased research and relevant, easy-access medical care are urgently needed for perhaps 200,000-300,000 Persian Gulf veterans with new unexplained illnesses. As documented by a dozen General Accounting Office reports and the 1998 Senate Veterans Affairs Report by Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., it is unclear whether this is possible within today's VA and military medicine organizations.

— K. Murray Leisure, MD, Infectious Diseases & Epidemiology, Hershey, Pa.

## Shutting Its Doors?

TOGO WEST'S statement highlighted in "Quality Time in D.C." (June) was only right to the point that they don't intentionally plan on shutting down any VA hospital. He failed to state that the present budget and the 2000 budget are barely up to the levels of the 1998 budget for VA hospitals.

I have been told by employees at both the Walla Walla and Seattle hospitals that there is a push to force patients to choose between Seattle or Portland (the bigger VA hospitals in our area). It seems to me as though the incrementalism of closing down the VA hospital system as it now exists is in progress.

— Gary L. Ennen, Pasco, Wash.

## Study Sheet

J.D. WETTERLING'S "Still the Noblest Calling," (May) is the most emotionally moving article I have read in years. As a substitute teacher, I save things to use in class. This piece will go to the top of the list. I pray I can do justice to all veterans in explaining the awesome emotions of going to the "Wall" to today's teens.

— Larry Kleinwelterink, Yale, Iowa







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## Representing The Republic

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID regarding the ruling of the "Nine Old Men" and the right to burn or desecrate in any way, the American Flag. Many folks giggle and give in, citing the fact that the Old Men ruled, and thus it is "the law of the land." I have never heard the counter argument that in our "Pledge of Allegiance," which is all but forgotten, it is stated, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands."

Now if this flag stands for the Republic of the United States of America, as stated millions of times by our citizens in their pledge of allegiance, I submit that the Supreme Court is all wet.

Flag desecration should not be termed free speech, except by the intelligence impaired. An amendment must be made to our constitution preventing the Supreme Court from stupid interpretations of our laws.

— Bill Killmer, Pisgah Forest, N.C.

## Budget Buddies

READING "Low Wage Warriors," (June) made my heart break. My husband and I suffered just like the families in your article.

We have been retired for seven years and are just now starting to get our heads above water. Legislators may freely give themselves pay raises, yet they ask military personnel to live below poverty level and continue to take away "promised" benefits from us.

My husband and I were too proud to accept assistance — my husband sold blood to get us by. The military was our life, we loved serving our country and had pride in our jobs, and you still have that in today's Armed Services.

It saddens me to think our congressmen can't see they are destroying our country with their lack of con-

cern for those who serve our country.

— Virginia D. Jones, Clarksdale, Miss.

## Movie Credits

WHAT BETTER MOVIE to have seen on Memorial Day than *Saving Private Ryan*. My father was in World War II and was at the invasion of Peleliu. He had never spoken of this until the summer of 1998.

Even then, I didn't realize how bad things were during World War II. My eyes were opened and tear-filled after watching the movie. I would like to thank everyone who served in World War II, as well as those who continued to defend this country every day thereafter.

— Edward G. Siderits, Sebring, Fla.

## Unfounded Criticism

FLETCHER HARRIS'S criticism of Dale Dye ("That's Hollywood," August) is unfounded. I do not doubt Harris's story about his regiment, and I have the greatest respect for his service, but a simple check of photos in books about D-Day shows that many soldiers from many units wore their division insignia during the invasion.

— James Whorton, Monroe, La.

## Retired Savings

YOUR JUNE ISSUE had a commentary, "The Struggle for Social Security" by Donald Lambro. Lambro presented a general overview and concluded that workers should "use their payroll taxes to build fully investment retirement plans on their own."

But there is more to this issue. Amazingly it was expressed by Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., who said in the Congressional Record, "Obviously, the first way to save Social Security is to stop looting it!"

Who is behind the Social Security reform movement and who profits from confusing and misleading the citizens of this country? Is there a hidden agenda?

I find the biggest mistake politicians make is to believe that what aging has done to our physical appearance means our thinking capacity has deteriorated as well.

— Don V. Viglione, Fair Lawn, N.J.

## Salvation

I AM A MEMBER of the Con Thien Memorial Post 1945. I was incarcerated at Arthur Kill Correctional Facility in the Veterans' Dorm. I served proudly in Vietnam from May 25, 1967, to May 13, 1968. I got involved in drugs which eventually led me to incarceration on a number of occasions.

I joined The American Legion at Arthur Kill and that has helped me change my life. The vets at Arthur Kill are as proud of our flag as any vets in America. I started to listen to what Legionnaires had to say, and when I was paroled on March 30, I remembered what I had learned.

I came to Montrose VA Hospital and have just completed the 21-day substance abuse program. I am now in the Domiciliary and, on June 3, I go to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Unit for 45 days. I feel good that I'm doing the right thing and want to thank The American Legion and the vets at Arthur Kill for pointing me in the right direction.

— Francis McGinnity, Montrose, N.Y.

## Good Sense

THANK GOD for Sarah Roney and her poignant essay, "Making Sense of the Senseless" (Commander's Message, July). I am a member of the '50s generation which was labeled the "do nothing" generation by the radicals of the '60s who perceived themselves on the cutting edge of societal change.

Today, I'm viewed as somewhat of a dinosaur — not so much because of my age, but because of my "outdated" views on morals, character, family and priorities.

Partly tongue in cheek, I often nominate worthy candidates for the mythical Dinosaur Society. Young Sarah Roney is a breath of fresh air, a brilliant light in the darkness. She is most worthy of acceptance within the growing Society of Young Dinosaurs.

— Lee Cuny, New Orleans, La.



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# Straight Shooter With a Smile

***Al Lance brings legal expertise, drive and humor to the position of National Commander of The American Legion***

**By Peter B. Rose**  
Assistant Editor

**B**RASH isn't the word for him, and cocky is going too far. Driven is more like it. When you get to know Al Lance, you realize the mischievous intellect that shines through his dimpled, apple cheek smile, and his snappy repartee plumb much deeper and colder and harder when he is at "war" – and what you want most is not to be on the other side.

Lance's public representation this decade spirals upward from the Idaho House of Representatives to House Majority Caucus Chairman in his second term, and then the leap to quick-witted, enterprising, hard-nosed Idaho Attorney General. In his second term as the state's top legal advisor, Lance runs a \$13 million department with 178 employees, 114 of whom are lawyers.

**Rising Star.** On a parallel course, his American Legion star has brightened from gleam to glow to the rush of a comet through his posts as Department Commander, National Executive Committee member, Chairman of the National Foreign Relations Commission, and now the top position of all – National Commander of The American Legion. He's the first Idaho resident to ever serve in that post.

What's this all about? What stirred Lance to elected office this last decade after years of community service,

which included leading the fight to obtain funding for two state veterans homes?

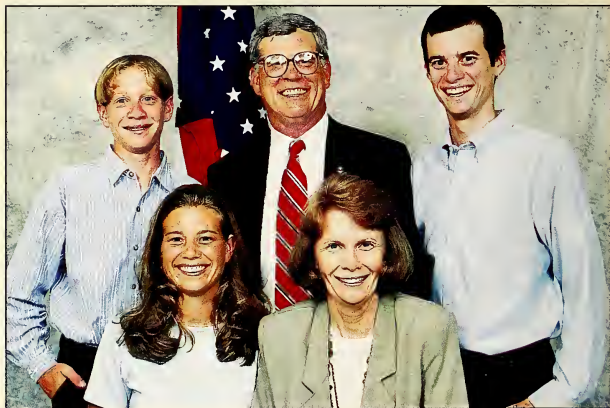
"Politicians will tell you the same old thing," Lance characteristically grins, smoothing his salt-and-pepper cap of hair above his natty appearance. He is so tautly poised that he seems spring-loaded, ready to pounce and prosecute, or pull off a humorous yarn or wry aside, at all times.

Beneath the high ceiling of his handsomely adorned Idaho Capitol office, Lance is surrounded by plaques of appreciation, awards and commendation medals. Dear to him are thanks from Oklahoma City bombing survivors for the leading role his office

plays against domestic terrorism. The Department of the Army congratulates him for exceptionally meritorious service in its Judge Advocate General Corps, and an Army tank, the "Think Fast" Marines, Navy Thunderbirds, Air Force Blue Angels and a Coast Guard vessel conspicuously poster across one wall.

"For injustice or wrong to be righted, other people won't do it for you – you've got to do it yourself," he emphasizes, not wanting to spin a political cliché, but still impressed with its truth.

Beneath that grin, below that crackling, easily assumed, highly entertaining social manner, you know, you



***Lance's entire family has been involved in American Legion activities that include the Idaho Department, Girls State, Boys State, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion. Sons Luke, left, and Alan Jr. flank Al, with daughter Lia and wife Sherry in front.***





*As a youngster growing up in Custer, Ohio, Lance was known for his prowess with a .22 rifle. Farmers called him to shoot the woodchucks that ate their soybeans, then let him hunt pheasants on their land. In recent years Lance invented, built and patented a portable gallery, silhouette and target made especially for air rifles and air pistols. The invention is being evaluated by the industry.*

**Message to Clowns.** Idaho's best editorial page, that of The Lewiston Tribune, tosses a banner bouquet: "Al Lance sends a message to Colorado clowns."

The commentary reads, "Idaho Attorney General Al Lance recognized a fund-raising hustle by a political action committee as much more than a legitimate attack on Bill and Hillary Clinton. With the help of the Idaho courts, Lance slammed the louts, continuing his record as one of the best watchdogs ever in this state in the consumer protection field."

Now it must be said, Lance is not a Clinton defender. He believes veterans have been getting a raw deal from the administration and that military spending needs to be increased.

"Our military is rapidly again becoming a hollow force," Lance says. "The services are not meeting their recruiting goals and the veterans are being denied the care that they deserve when they get out."

**Support for VA.** As attorney general, Lance sued Clinton's VA to ensure that eligible veterans could obtain needed medication at no cost and that states would be partially reimbursed by the federal government for nursing home care. Lance won.

In Idaho, Lance is probably not toasted by the lawyers he cut from the attorney general's office that others had been trying to consolidate for decades. He reduced his staff and

decreased the use of outside attorneys to save Idaho \$1.6 million.

Look closely at Lance's face, and you might recognize the wisecracking, tongue-in-cheek, "Aw shucks" David Letterman merging into the stern, cut-and-dried, no-nonsense visage of Atlanta Falcon football coach Dan Reeves.

Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne is

sense, you feel it in your bones — this guy ain't kidding at all.

The Boise Weekly, the city's alternative newspaper, pictures Lance as a smiley cowboy branding a cow "AL" to represent his battles against environmental extremists who want to stop all grazing on public land.

Another Boise Weekly piece is a Q&A that concludes with his analysis

of his job as attorney general. "I get to write these very extensive and erudite opinions and then watch everybody ignore them." He dashes vinegar into the wound with this observation about his reviewing bills for the Legislature: "There is a high probability that the Supreme Court ultimately will strike down this law that you choose to pass."



Photo courtesy of Al Lance

**Al Lance, in the center of the front row, served with this group of lawyers as a member of the Judge Advocate General Corps during his eight years in the Army. As The American Legion National Commander, he wants to see the military meet its recruitment goals without jeopardizing its standards.**

known for his great skill in bringing opposing sides of an issue together, forging compromise and moving ahead with a bill or program that is of public benefit, thereby breaking previous stalemate. He excelled in this manner as Boise Mayor and as a U.S. Senator, and may be the most popular person in the state. He has no doubts when it comes to his state's attorney general.

***"For injustice or wrong to be righted, other people won't do it for you — you've got to do it yourself."***

*Al Lance*

"I rely on Al for a variety of things," Kempthorne explains in his smooth-as-custard demeanor while facing away from the "Pray" placard on his desk. "He provides a great deal of legal advice for the state. Al Lance is a nice person to be around, and also tough as nails. I don't have to guess what his mood is — he's solid and keeps his cool."

**Dual Role.** Addressing Lance's new position as The American Legion Commander, which he will hold in

conjunction with his Idaho Attorney General's job, Kempthorne adds, "Idaho is very proud of Al Lance's continuous devotion, the time and effort, that he gives to vets. We all hold him in the highest esteem."

"In his capacity as National Commander he will demonstrate the greatness of Idaho and do both of his jobs in remarkable fashion."

Before accepting the dual responsibility, Lance consulted with three past National Commanders who held other positions while heading the Legion. H.F. "Sparky" Gierke served on the North Dakota Supreme Court, Jimmy Dean served as a Mississippi judge and Bill Detweiler continued his work as constable for the city of New Orleans. All offered encouragement.

"With our advanced communications today, Al can do both jobs while flying in an airplane above Saudi Arabia," quips Tom Moore, a Korean and Vietnam vet and a prominent member of the Idaho Department.

The peppery Phil Batt, a 50-year Legion veteran and predecessor to Kempthorne as Idaho Governor, tosses crusty witticisms out of the side of his mouth with the zeal of a dice thrower in Las Vegas. When asked about Lance's work as attorney general, he jokes, "He didn't charge me anything for my advice."

In a more serious vein, Batt recalls, "Our most important adventure was with the federal government. It concerned nuclear waste buried at the

Idaho National Engineering Laboratory near Idaho Falls.

"In exchange for our storing waste in 1995, Al obtained extremely valuable concessions. Our lawsuit carried over from the previous administration. We negotiated all over the country. The Navy was in a tremendous bind.

"Our storing the waste was a very unpopular process in Idaho. All of us wanted out of the waste business, and Al obtained the best possible agreement. There was an attempt to recall me, but the people backed me on the vote.

"Al is realistic but tough. He's tougher than I am." With that, to make sure of a balanced presentation, Batt added, "He's a very funny guy. He's kind of wry; different than most. He comes up with very hysterical things."

**Legion Roots.** "The Legion took up a good chunk of life in the small town of Custar, Ohio, where I grew up," Lance recalls. "I remember marching to the cemetery on Memorial Day as a child. After the discharge of arms, I was one of the kids who picked up the brass. There was a strong sense of patriotism that still exists."

Lance's grandfather was a machine gunner with the 332nd Regiment that fought in southern Europe in World War I. His enlistment form and a picture of him in uniform hang in the



Tom Moore

**Idaho National Guard Adjutant Maj. Gen. Jack Kane talks shop with Al Lance.**





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## Al Lance's Resumé

- Residence:** Meridian, Idaho
- Age:** 50.
- Family:** Wife Sherry; children Lisa, Alan Jr., and Luke.
- Education:** Bachelor of Arts degrees in English and history, South Dakota State University, 1971; law degree, University of Toledo (Ohio) Law School, 1973.
- Military:** U.S. Army, 1971-1978; Judge Advocate General Corps.
- The American Legion:** 1979 - present: Department Commander; National Executive Committeeman; Chairman, National Foreign Relations Commission; National Commander.
- Private Law Practice:** Meridian, Idaho, 1978-1991.
- State Government:** Idaho House of Representatives; 1990-1994 Idaho Attorney General; 1995-present (re-elected 1998).
- Interests:** Target shooting, boat-ing, hunting, fishing.

Lance family room. Although Al has always esteemed the military, he knew when he was in 6th or 7th grade that he would go to law school. As a military lawyer, he was able to fulfill both dreams.

**Making a Difference.** "I had a pretty keen sense of fairness and justice," he recalls. "I had made up my mind."

After earning his commission, he received extended leave to attend law school. He served with distinction in the Judge Advocate General Corps. When Lance joined The American Legion, his wife Sherry joined The American Legion Auxiliary, where she has held a number of top posts.

"Sherry is such an asset for Al," says Bill Deal, an Idaho legislator. "She's a superior campaigner, organizer and confidante, who provides a great deal of support while being so active herself in The American Legion family."

**Family Involvement.** The Lances celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary this May. Their children Lisa, Alan Jr., and Luke have strong involvement with the Legion's Junior Auxiliary and



*Passing the constitutional amendment to protect the flag will be high on National Commander Al Lance's agenda.*

Sons of The American Legion programs. Family reaction to Lance's position as National Commander ranges from "pretty exciting" to "a little unbelievable."

Lance thinks the Legion is "too bashful" and should achieve higher "awareness" for all the good things it does. Expect more effective communications to be on his agenda, especially in its application to higher membership. Like many of his predecessors, Lance will push for a constitutional amendment to protect the American Flag.

Lance also believes strongly in going beyond American Legion walls to

meet key people and organizations who can help the Legion meet its goals. "I want to tell our story to Congress and our younger troops on carriers and in foxholes. I'd like to spread the word by meeting Chambers of Commerce, the Kiwanis Club, and other service groups."

He notes, "Rotary International has increased its membership by attracting young female executives into its membership."

If Lance's record says anything, he'll move ahead smartly on these priorities. □

*Article design: Simon Smith*



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## THE FIELD COMMANDER

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Department of Veterans Affairs

A veteran is prepared for surgery just as Congress and the administration appear on the verge of cutting VA's budget.

# Support Vital for Crumbling VA

**As it stands,  
Fiscal 2000  
VHA budget  
breaches  
faith with  
America's  
veterans.**

**By Peter Rose  
Assistant Editor**

**T**HE 13 appropriations subcommittee chairmen in the House and Senate are so important in the distribution of a mysterious national budget that they are called "cardinals" by those familiar with the legislative process.

Every June, they take off the wraps in the House; in July they do the same in the Senate, when their appropriations bills are due. That

leads to September conferences and October votes by members of both congressional bodies, and then finally presidential review.

**Critical Decision.** What kind of shake the Department of Veterans Affairs gets from "the cardinals" and subsequent decision makers is being closely scrutinized by The American Legion and other supportive parties at a time when the VA seems poised between taking giant forward steps and falling into lamentable, and possibly inoperable, disrepair.



VA is lumped with 20 other agencies that are all fighting as much funding as possible for their programs. The competition is formidable, including such heavyweights as the National

Aeronautics and Space Administration and Housing and Urban Development.

Butch Miller, Past National Commander of The American Legion, called on veterans and their families to continue pressuring their elected members of Congress for an adequate budget for VA. These lawmakers tend to be sensitive to the wills of their constituents because serving them well leads to re-election, while ignoring voters could send incumbents home.

"Whenever they were called, America's veterans kept their commitment to this country," Miller said. "Now it's time for the country to keep its commitment to the veterans."

**Asking for More.** Last October, then-National Commander Miller presented The American Legion's plan for the new VA budget during testimony before a joint meeting of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. He urged \$1.4 billion more for the VA than was provided in fiscal 1999 appropriations. In the fiscal 2000 budget resolution, lawmakers, persuaded by the Legion's case, recommended that \$1.7 billion be added to the \$43.6 billion originally sought by the administration for a \$45.4 billion total.

But when the figures for all agencies in

## A closer look at VA reveals what it does, and why it is at a crossroads.

the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Subcommittee were allocated this spring, discretionary funding was chopped in the House by \$5.8 billion, for a total of \$66.2 billion, and in the Senate by \$9.6 billion, for a \$62.3 billion total.

Don't be fooled into believing that VA isn't vulnerable to these early cuts because Congress is sympathetic to veterans, advises John R. Vitikacs, Assistant director of the American Legion's National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Lawmakers must be reminded by veterans and their families of the importance of VA's budget through e-mail, calls and letters.

**A Look Back.** A closer look at VA reveals what it does, and why it is at a crossroads.

Caring for the needs of veterans goes back to 1776, when the Continental Congress developed a program to provide pensions to disabled veterans.

Now VA covers an amazingly broad spectrum of benefits and services for the country's more than 25 million veterans whose participation in wars and conflicts has not only kept America free, but other lands around the globe, and for their 44 million family members.

On the heels of Desert Storm, VA provided counseling services to Gulf War veterans and established centers to assist veterans with undiagnosed illnesses.

As with Gulf War issues, VA's response to the needs of homeless veterans has grown steadily. The department is among the federal agencies that provide substantial hands-on assistance directly to homeless persons by offering a wide array of services and initiatives to help veterans and their dependents live as independently as possible.

The establishment of a separate VA Emergency Medical Preparedness Office in 1990 also reflected VA's growing role beyond its traditional mission. This office coordinates VA's support of the National

Disaster Medical System.

Congress also recognized VA as the principal hospital backup to the Defense Department in time of war or national emergency. VA's response to domestic disasters and military crises was tested repeatedly during a decade that began with the Gulf War and witnessed the ravages of hurricanes, earthquakes and floods throughout the United States, as well as the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

**Spread Too Thin.** In this decade, VA restructured its health care system, opened 200 outpatient clinics and adopted a new health benefits plan that provides veterans a guaranteed package of services at any VA facility. In 1992, it opened the San Joaquin Valley, Calif., National Cemetery, and will add five more cemeteries by the year 2000, providing greater access for veterans and their dependents.

Vice President Al Gore honored the New York VA Regional Office with the

**"VA is meeting the long-term care needs of only 21.4 percent of disabled and poor veterans,"**

— John R. Vitikacs  
The American Legion  
VA & R

first Hammer Award which is presented to teams of federal employees for recognizing efficient ways of reinventing government. That office's pioneering work in re-engineering the claims process sparked a renewed systemwide effort to simplify, consolidate and automate the claims process for veterans.

But there is room for plenty of improvement, and without adequate funding, the roof could cave in.

**Old Medicine.** "Up until the mid-1990s, the VA practiced 'old medicine,'" notes Vitikacs. "Most care was provided by physicians in a hospital-based system that goes back to World War II. New VA leadership brought in fresh ideas that resulted in radical and evolutionary changes.

"The problem is that the budget, instead of an optimal medical model, has dictated what has been done."

Carroll Williams, director of The



World War II veteran Lyle Kubik pedals with his hands to strengthen his arms in the occupational therapy lab.

# Support Vital for Crumbling VA

American Legion's National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, predicts, "The administration's budget request will further damage an already fragile health-care system. The proposal will allow the system to stumble along, hoping for future long-term fixes."

"The American Legion is extremely disappointed with the degree of fiscal austerity imposed by the Clinton administration on the Veterans Health Administration," Williams says. "Elsewhere in the administration's fiscal 2000 budget, there is

sufficient evidence of a far more progressive fiscal policy toward certain non-veteran federal programs. However, the fiscal policy devoted to veterans health care is extremely stagnant, if not regressive."

Although supportive of VHA's goals of reducing per-patient cost for health care services, The American Legion fears the fiscal 2000 budget proposal will weaken direct patient care in too many areas in order to strengthen other programs.

VHA proposes to increase funding for treatment of Hepatitis C patients, provide additional funding for long-term care, expand emergency care for service-disabled veterans enrolled in VHA, increase by 54,000 the veterans treated, open 89 new outpatient clinics, provide additional funding for homelessness initiatives and meet increasing medical care inflation and pay raises with no real increases in appropriations.

**Breach of Faith.** "What is most likely to happen due to the expanded initiatives and a no-growth budget is continued reductions in direct patient care," Williams says. "All the



Terumi Noka Morgan uses duplex ultrasound to scan the carotid artery of a veteran in the Geriatric Research and Education Center.

applicable patient care data and statistics can subsequently be furnished to justify current policies."

The American Legion believes the fiscal 2000 budget proposal for VHA "represents a serious breach of faith with America's veterans," Williams says. "In an era of budgetary surpluses in the billions of dollars, where are the resources and plans to permanently strengthen VHA?"

"In recent years, Congress has reclaimed veterans' benefits in an effort to reduce the federal deficit. Now that there is a balanced budget, no one is even considering any of the growing list of denied beneficiaries. Congress can do better in fiscal 2000 than the administration proposes. Appropriate funding support of VHA programs and services must be provided until such a time that a long-term strategy develops to safeguard the veterans' health care system."

Williams points out that to acquire a realistic picture of the current conditions within VHA, one must meet and listen to the staff that actually provides the direct care and services to the nation's veterans.

"There is an immense disconnect

when listening to the managers and administrators as opposed to the direct care staff describe the state of VHA," Williams says. "It is like speaking to two totally distinct health care systems rather than one."

An example of the "insider's view" being opposed to "the party line" comes in a letter received by *The American Legion Magazine* from Mary Ann Meader, a Vietnam veteran and registered nurse employed with the Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System.

"The flatline budget has drastically affected the ability of VA to provide quality health care," she writes. "The department is quickly being dismantled, and the future is bleak."

"We are at the point of splitting at the seams. Staff morale is low, overtime costs are at an all-time high and the bottom line rules over quality patient care."

In February Kenneth W. Kizer told *The American Legion Magazine* that VA's performance "is more efficient than Medicare. We're providing more care at lower cost than other programs. That's a fact. The second fact is that we're providing higher quality care."



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# Support Vital for Crumbling VA

At the time, Kizer was Undersecretary for Health, the federal government's highest ranking physician and one of the key players in the Veterans Health Administration's "Journey for Change." He is now chief health consultant to VA Secretary Togo D. West Jr.

**More Demand, Less Service.** However, VA's Advisory Committee on Long-Term Care reported to Congress in April that, "The department continues to witness a growth in demand but access to that care has not kept pace. In some cases, it has been sharply reduced."

Also in April, Rep. Sue Kelly, R-N.Y., introduced the Veterans Long Term Care Availability Act of 1999, which is legislation requiring the VA to provide long-term care to America's disabled veterans.

## The GI Bill of Health

Named after the famous legislation which enabled generations of veterans to attend college, this bill is a blueprint to meet the health care needs of veterans and their eligible dependents. Under the proposal:

- All veterans and their dependents would have access to the VA health-care system.
- All priority veterans would receive health-care treatment at no cost.
- All other veterans and dependents would pay for care.
- VA specialized treatment programs would be strengthened and access expanded.
- VA would offer defined health benefit packages on a premium basis to all eligible veterans and dependents.
- VA would bill, collect and retain all appropriate third-party reimbursements, co-payments, deductibles and premiums – where applicable.
- VA would create a health-plan network consisting of public and private providers.
- VA would open access to more health-care facilities within local communities through sharing agreements and contracts with public health-care providers.

"Incredibly, a veteran who has been disabled while serving his or her country has no guarantee of receiving extended care,"

Kelly says. "Today, if a veteran with a 50-percent or greater service-connected disability requires long-term care, they can only depend on 90 days of care. After that period the veteran must leave the VA hospital if it is determined that there is nothing that can be done to improve his or her condition. That is wrong and this legislation will guarantee that our veterans receive the appropriate extended care they need."

### Long-Term Care.

With further cutbacks possible due to lack of administration support, veteran needs continue to escalate. Long-term care is of particular concern to The American Legion.

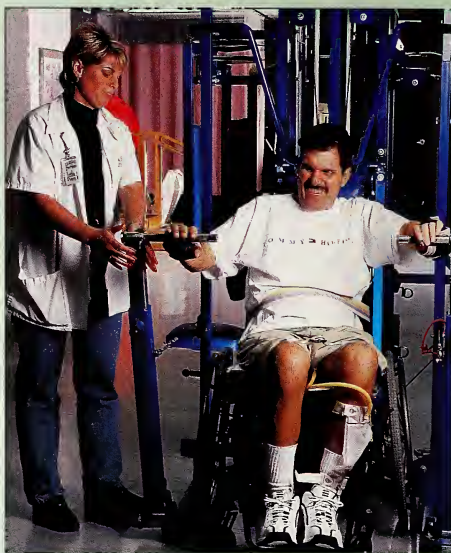
"The current and projected number of veterans over the age of 65 continues to increase," Vitikacs notes. "Veterans age 65 or older will peak at 9.3 million in the year 2000."

"By the year 2010, approximately 42 percent of the entire veteran population – an estimated 8.5 million of 20 million veterans – will be 65 years of age or older. By 2030, the baby boom generation and Vietnam veterans will reach into their 80s."

This means that an increasing number of Americans will require long-term care.

And yet, today, "VA is meeting the long-term care needs of only 21.4 percent of disabled and poor veterans," Vitikacs explains.

In 1993 the Clinton administration launched its efforts to reform the nation's health care system. The administration's "Health Security Act" proposed sweeping changes for private and government health care. After the act collapsed in 1994, The American Legion developed its own



Karrie Iorio, a kinesiologist, works the weights with Maj. Barry Mutch, Army, who suffered spinal cord injuries in an auto rollover. Mutch was doing a chest press to help with movement of his right shoulder.

legislative proposal that culminated with its GI Bill of Health, which recognizes the need to develop non-appropriated sources of income.

**Preparing for the Future.** "It is time to develop a premium support system to supplement taxpayer dollars to strengthen and maintain the VHA for the long-term," Williams told the House of Representatives this February. "The GI Bill of Health is a blueprint for preparing the VHA to meet the health-care needs of veterans and their eligible dependents in the 21st century."

Whether the VA moves smartly ahead to effectively take on new challenges and better care for its veterans, or slides into disarray and obsolescence, depends largely on its support by Congress and the administration. That's where veterans can help their own cause, by contacting their congressional representatives.

"To preserve VA as an irreplaceable safety net for this nation's veterans, we must keep a clear, calculating eye on the things that work and the steps that need to be taken," Miller advises. "We need to preserve a properly funded VA." □

Article design: Mary Magee



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***With VA tightening its fiscal belt, hospital beds once available for long-term care are becoming a scarce commodity.***



# Long-Term Care Reform Long

**By Layne Cameron**  
**Assistant Editor**

**M**ANY GENERATIONS of veterans were promised "health care for life" by the Department of Defense. Many took this promise as bedrock truth. Why shouldn't they? Uncle Sam had never let them down before. And while

much of their health care has been taken care of, veterans needing long-term care are being squeezed out of the VA hospitals at an increasing rate.

"It's always been on a space-available basis, and there was always space available. But since the tightening up, there have been fewer and fewer beds," says Jacqueline Garrick, The American Legion VA&R Deputy Director for Health Care.

**Budget-Driven Care.** Part of the reduction has been caused by the trans-

formation of the VA health-care system. By now, most veterans are familiar with VISNs – the 22 Veterans Integrated Service Networks which span the United States. Going hand-in-hand with VISNs is VERA – Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation funding system. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., explained in a recent letter how the changes will impact this system: "Under this new funding system, networks that were previously under funded, will now receive resources equal to the system average patient. ... For networks





According to Earl Utterback Jr., right, he was told by VA, "Your father no longer needs our help. We are moving him tomorrow." With that notice, Utterback was moved to Steubenville, Ohio.

# Overdue

that will receive less funding per patient than they historically have received, there will be incentives to operate more efficiently and to continue the emphasis on implementing the most cost-effective treatment."

So, in reality, the financial risk for treating patients while working within the prescribed budget has shifted to the individual networks. Some VISNs feeling the pinch are having to reduce the number of high-cost patients – such as those suffering from long-term illnesses – in order to maintain another

priority of treating more veterans.

What has many veterans' advocates bristling is that VA is trying to cut back long-term care – arguably the best geriatric and extended care in the business – when many experts are forecasting a substantial increase in demand. "Soon we will begin to see a demographic tidal wave of baby boomers that will threaten the system itself," says Patrick Brady, executive director of Citizens For Long-Term Care. The Pepper Commission predicts this tsunami of people needing assistance with daily living will double, and those needing nursing home care will triple, by 2030.

Ron Conley, NEC member from Pennsylvania, has been "walking point" on this matter for many years. He has seen VA hospitals draw down full-time employees and replace them with temporary help and independent contractors, or cut positions entirely from the roster. He documented the reduction of patients suffering from long-term illnesses in Pennsylvania hospitals: Highland Drive facility down from 300 patients to 216; Erie VA Hospital reduced from 61 to 8; and Butler VA Medical Center down from 112 to 85.

Conley has also listened to the sobs of veterans' wives, like Jane Vaglia, who wanted to know why her husband was being pressured to be moved from the Highland Drive facility where he had lived for nearly a decade.

Vaglia was asked by social workers to pick another nursing home for her husband. Otherwise, they threatened to move him to a home in Steubenville, Ohio – 70 miles away. She contacted The American Legion, and together they kept him from being transferred out of state. By writing letters and making phone calls to senators and VA, her husband was able to live out his last year at the Aspinwall VA facility, less than 10 miles from Highland Drive.

Others like Earl Utterback Jr. weren't as lucky. Earl Utterback Jr. is distraught on how it all happened. According to Utterback, VA informed him that his

father no longer needed their help, and that he was being moved to Steubenville – the following day. "I

gave up my father's pension and Social Security for this," says Utterback. "My dad hollered at me, 'why did you put me here?' " Through his father's haze of dementia and bouts of depression, Utterback hopes his father understands: "I didn't have a choice, Dad."

VISN Network directors, like former VISN 4 Director Robert L. Jones, defend this policy by saying that caring for more veterans "doesn't necessarily mean inpatient hospital care." In a let-

ter responding to Vaglia's concerns, Jones said VA considers community nursing homes an extension of the VA health-care system. "Because of the significant expense involved in staffing hospital beds," Jones wrote, "it would be inappropriate and inefficient to continue to house patients who are in need of only nursing care."

Without an increase in the VA bud-

**What has many veterans' advocates bristling is that VA is trying to cut back long-term care... when many experts are forecasting a substantial increase in demand.**



Many long-term care veterans, like Earl Utterback, are being moved from VA hospitals to private facilities.

get, Conley believes, the cuts in employees and long-term patients will continue. "The VA cannot maintain quality care for the number of veterans in the medical system with the current budget. This isn't just Pennsylvania, either. This is happening nationwide."

**Stemming The Flow.** Acknowledging these cutbacks as a trend and not just isolated instances, The American Legion passed **Resolution 77: The American Legion Policy on Long-Term Care** at the Orlando Convention and reaffirmed its position a year later in New Orleans with **Resolution 173**. Simply put, the Legion believes all eligible veterans should be able to receive long-term care. Once these veterans have been accepted into the VA system, they should not be excluded or charged extra for the services promised to them. So any changes at this point should affect only newcomers and not veterans already receiving care.

Jacqueline Garrick wrote a letter Jan. 13 to Dr. Kenneth Kizer, VA Under Secretary for Health, expressing the Legion's position on the Federal Advisory Committee report "VA Long-Term Care at the Crossroads."

The first item addressed was outsourcing care. While the VA looks at finding independent contractors as a cost savings, the Legion views this as simply shifting the burden. Currently, there is no data that documents how well the current outsourcing has worked. Secondly, there are no provisions in place to keep these contractors accountable to the VA.

The next item in the report concerned the definition of long-term care: "A set of health, personal care and social services delivered over a

sustained period of time to persons who have lost or never acquired some degree of functional capacity." It seems more priority is being placed on the functional status of the patient instead of the level of care provided. This leads to questioning if the advisory committee is more concerned with preserving the program than the individual patient's needs. "The American Legion," the report says, "questions the ability of the committee to accurately render judgment on the future of care when the budget and not the patient is at the center of the discussion."

Another flaw in the proposal is the use of the year 2010 as the planning horizon. Only 42 percent of veterans will be older than 65 by then. Statistics indicate the average age of nursing home residents is 85. With the Pepper

Commission predicting substantial increases in this population by 2030, the report may offer misleading solutions by cutting off 20 years.

Further into the Legion's response, more questions are raised in regard to outsourcing. VA's promise to "maintain, invigorate and re-engineer the core of VA-operated systems" is not supported by any substantive examples. By removing such services from the menu of choices, VA denies the veteran the freedom to choose VA.

"Several options should be

considered before outsourcing," says Garrick.

The Legion supports Kizer's recent proposal made during a hearing in Philadelphia. Kizer believes Congress must mandate long-term care as an essential service. Home health care must be expanded, but not at the expense of institutional care. VA must develop new revenue sources. According to the Legion's position, Medicare subsidies should be an obvious solution, especially if augmented by the G.I. Bill of Health. Finally, Kizer wants Congress to appropriately fund VA long-term care.

Jane Vaglia's pleas to protect her late husband ring true for many veterans: "These men gave up the best years of their lives, left their families when the government said, 'I need you.' What happened to putting veterans first? Grant them the benefits they were promised and so rightly deserve." □

*Editor's Note: For copies of the Federal Advisory Committee report, "VA Long-Term Care at the Crossroads," write Dr. Judy Salerno, VA Chief Consultant for Geriatrics and Extended Care, 810 Vermont Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20420. For copies of the Legion's response to the report, write: The American Legion, c/o Jacqueline Garrick, 1608 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20002.*

*Photos by Ken Love  
Article design: Simon Smith*



Jane Vaglia kneels next to the grave of her husband who, thanks to her efforts and The American Legion, was allowed to die in the familiar setting of a VA hospital.



Jane Vaglia and Pennsylvania NEC man Ron Conley stand in front of the hospital from which Vaglia's husband was forced to move.





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# Legionnaires Roam the Range

**Vets help** Boy Scouts ride high in the saddle



Actors prepare to descend – with guns blazing – to Philmont's opening campfire.



**By Layne Cameron**  
**Assistant Editor**  
photos by Tom Stratman

**O**MINOUS THUNDERHEADS roll over the 10,000-foot peaks which surround Beaubien Meadow nestled in the heart of New Mexico's Sangre de Cristo range. Guessing the severity and locale of the cloud-bursts serves as a way for ranchhands and guests to pass

time while milling around the corral awaiting the cavalcade of Scouts chartered by Clarence L. Nieman Post 455, Woodville, Ohio.

Eventually the rain slackens and the troop appears at the trailhead at last – three adult advisors, two trail guides and 10 Scouts clad in damp, yellow slickers. After finishing nine hours on the trail, Scout advisor and Legionnaire Doug Sparks dismounts looking as tired as his horse (and just as eager to strap on a feed bag). He has just cov-

ered more than 14 miles of descents and climbs, spending much of the ride above 10,000 feet. "We were up at 3:30 a.m. in order to get the ride and our activities in," says the bedraggled Vietnam veteran.

The crew's advisors – Sparks, his wife Nancy (Auxiliary member), and Don Rozick (fellow Post member) – represent the commitment to youth which drew The American Legion to pledge its support for Scouting 80 years ago.



Bottom row (left to right): Marcus Williams, Ashley Harr, Tracey Tilkemeyer, Legionnaire Don Rozick and Chris Aldrich.  
Top row: Kara Novogradac, Auxiliary member Nancy Sparks, Alex Hausman, Brian Collins, Steve Sabo, Adam Thieroff, Andrew Schack, Carrie Eitten, Legionnaire Doug Sparks and Anna LaPointe



When the Legion founders gathered for the 1919 Minneapolis Convention, they resolved: "The American Legion heartily recommends the principles and achievements of the Boy Scouts and recommends that each Post assist the Scout troops in its community in whatever manner practicable."

**Weather Delay.** Rain had slowed the crew the last two days. In fact, the previous day's deluge covered the ground with two inches of hail (the remnants of which still lay in drifts in the shade of the cabins). The early arrival of the Land of Enchantment's so-called monsoon season adds a bit of discomfort and adventure, and in a sense enhances the Boy Scouts' trek across Philmont Scout Ranch—the organization's premier high-adventure base.

This 137,493-acre expanse of rugged wilderness, near Cimarron, draws thousands of Scouts each summer. Its welcome center serves as a revolving door, admitting 300 guests and discharging an equal number daily. "There are 4,500 Scouts in the backcountry," says Mark Anderson, Philmont's director of programs. "During the summer, we are one of the largest cities in New Mexico—except we're spread out over a few hundred thousand acres."

The transient populace spends eight

to 20 days in the elements honing their Scouting skills. Cleanliness becomes a necessity, else risk a plethora of intestinal ailments; fitness is a priority, to prevent injury and a premature trip home; and remaining mentally awake can prevent situations like black bears pillaging food and rattlesnakes entering bed rolls. The rewards for these dedicated Scouts are activities such as rock climbing, fly fishing, gold panning, mountaineering, muzzle loading, horseback riding and filling mental scrapbooks with pristine alpine scenes.

While some Scouts dabble in equine activities, Sparks and the members of Troop 329 choose to immerse themselves. By opting for the horse cavalcade, the crew spends the majority of its time on horseback, thus establishing a kinship with the ranch's early trekkers. When



Above: Don Rozick takes his turn leading the pack horse along the trail. Below: Carrie Litten proves you can lead a horse to water without falling into the drink.

Philmont opened its gates in 1939, trekking by horseback was standard. With the growth of backpacking, however, the horse cavalcade faded to extinction until revived again in the early '70s. "Seeing the backcountry while sitting on the back of a horse," says Bob Ricklefs, ranch superintendent.





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Adam Thieroff lassos an errant, stationary stray.

dent, "in my opinion, it's the only way to go."

Troop 329 agrees. Preparing for the cavalcade began 18 months before its departure. The group used the time to pore over the adventure base's literature covering itineraries, first aid, how to deal with bears, adjusting to the altitude and how to handle their four-legged porters.

**Learning the Skills.** Back at Woodville, one Scout's neighbor runs a stable and an indoor arena. "We put in at least 10 hours of class," says

Doug Sparks. "They showed us how to put on a saddle, how to feed the horses and what pants and boots work the best."

Augmenting their novice skills, the Scouts spent a weekend of camping and riding at central Ohio's Mohican Wilderness Campground, allowing them to rehearse for their 8-day trek. But even the Philmont literature warns, "Be aware that there is a great difference between eight hours in the saddle at Philmont and one or two hours of practice at your local stable."

Seeing the weary crew attempting

to reconstitute dinner attests to that. Scout Adam Thieroff's offering of instant potatoes, turkey chips with gravy and a haphazard concoction of cake-turned-pudding would



Doug Sparks.

have sent the crew scurrying to McDonalds had they been served this at home. On the trail, however, this tasty three-course feast satisfies all. "This is my shining moment," Thieroff jokes.

After dinner, a few Scouts attempt to lasso a stationary calf. The futility of their throws offers an inkling of the difficulty performing the same maneuver while on horseback. Not surprisingly, the crew turns in early for the night.

**Time to Ride.** The next morning, crew members shake off the morning chill by grabbing a handful of rein and mane and mounting their steeds for a ride to where the Rayado and Agua Fria creeks converge. Talk of who is the best fly-fisherman and boasts of who would catch the biggest trout pace the crew throughout the two-hour ride.

As the afternoon showers move in, the Scouts take it in stride. Today's precipitation falls more like snow than rain with droplets fluttering like snowflakes through the ponderosa-covered pass. Plans to fish remain intact since the fish won't be bothered, the Scouts joke, because they're already wet.

Each day on the trail builds confidence and self-reliance. Horses become easier to manage; camps construct and break quicker; all the while an overwhelming feeling of "hey, I can do this," fills each Scout. Unfazed by foul weather or withdrawal from luxuries such as home-cooked meals, hot showers, satellite television or the Internet, they amble toward their next campsite.

To paraphrase Robert Frost, the Scouts traversing Philmont have arrived where two roads diverged in a mountainous wood. They are quailed literally taking the one less traveled by, and that is making all the difference in the world.

Article design: Mary Magee



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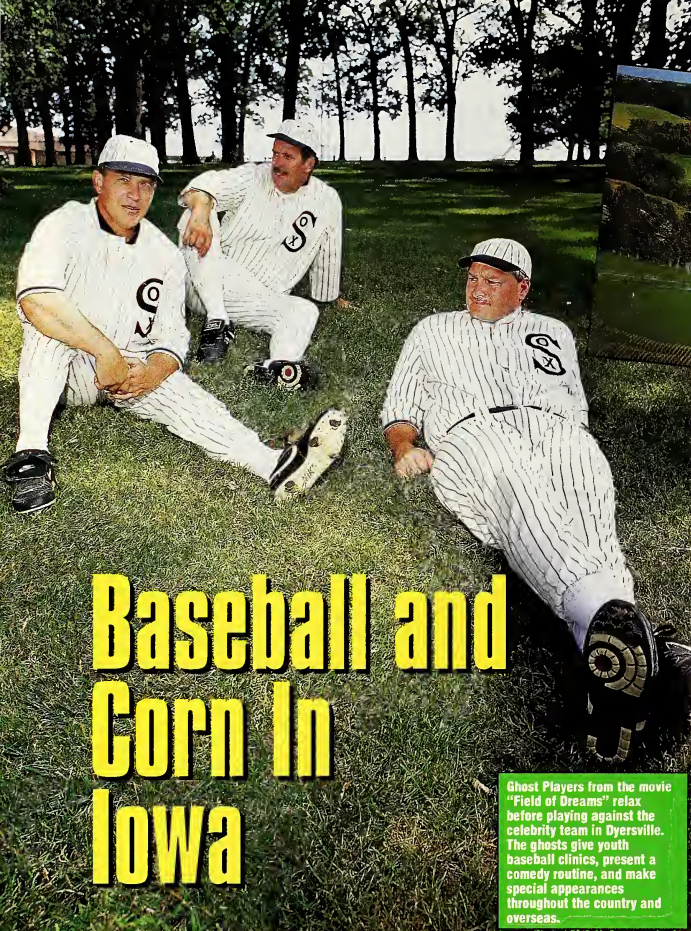
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The "Field of Dreams" in Dyersville, Iowa, was the scene of the "Shoeless" Joe Jackson tournament.

# Baseball and Corn In Iowa

Ghost Players from the movie "Field of Dreams" relax before playing against the celebrity team in Dyersville. The ghosts give youth baseball clinics, present a comedy routine, and make special appearances throughout the country and overseas.

**July 4th American Legion tournament taps nostalgia with "ghosts," celebrities, and a parade**

**By Peter Rose**  
**Assistant Editor**



BASEBALL IS about youth, the rejuvenation of spring, and stories and myths about the game.

Dyersville, Iowa, is rich in all of these, because of, literally, its corn. The American Legion July 4 baseball tournament here, officially the First "Shoeless" Joe Jackson National

Tournament, brought thousands of people back to the stalks of the movie "Field of Dreams."

A classic old-time parade where folding chairs proliferated under the shade of hardwood trees; a softball game that matched celebrities and "corn field ghosts;" the campaign to reinstate "Shoeless" Joe Jackson to baseball and put him in the Hall of Fame; and an evening of fireworks turned up the nostalgia as high as it gets around a baseball diamond.

Sixteen American Legion teams from nine states as far west as Wy-

oming, south as South Carolina, and east as New Jersey rolled in for the tournament.

Napoleon, Ohio, knocked off Genoa City, Wis., for the tournament championship. Newberry, S.C., defeated Dubuque, Iowa, for the consolation bracket title.

"The kids enjoyed the range of competitors and visiting The Field of Dreams," said Keith Merrillat, one of the Napoleon coaches. "The experience gave them more of a feel for the history of the game."

The first activity for the team from Newberry, S.C., was to visit the preserved "Field of Dreams" movie site. Its diamond and outfield surrounded by a corn field, located three miles from the town and tournament, is open to the public. More than 600,000 people are said to have visited since the movie starring Kevin Costner, James Earl Jones and Burt Lancaster was nominated for "Picture of the Year" in 1989.

The movie focused on an Iowa farmer, Ray Kinsella, who builds a baseball field in his corn field that brings back to life members of the 1919 Chicago White Sox, wrongly accused, in Kinsella's mind, of throwing the World Series. These players magically step out of the corn for another chance to show their baseball prowess. Along with the banishment of the "Black Sox" from baseball, one of Kinsella's regrets - and one poignantly remembered by many viewers - is his missing the opportunity to play catch with his father. If that error existed among parents and players of the Newberry team, the group did its best to catch up in Dyersville.

"Our parents and kids hit and threw





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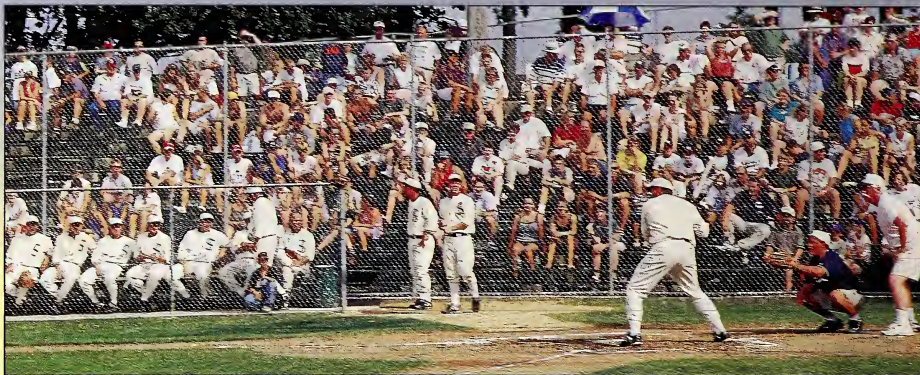
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A "Field of Dreams" ghost player takes a cut at the ball in the celebrity games at Dyersville. The ghost players had recently entertained the U.S. military in Spain, Sicily, Crete, Italy, Turkey and Germany. They visited sites where combat strikes were flown against the Serbs in Yugoslavia.

the ball around. The kids pitched to their dads," said Newberry coach Walter Shealy, with a touch of fondness in his voice. That was the team's first priority. Not clobbering the enemy. Not hitting for average. Not pitching shutouts. Just enjoying each other's company.

A group of 62 people that included players, coaches, family, and friends rode the Newberry bus 18 hours from South Carolina.

**Touching Many Bases.** "We met kids and coaches from all over the country," Shealy said of the experience. "The coach of a Chicago team asked us to play in a tournament there, which really flattered us."

"Lots of American Legion teams go

to independent tournaments, round robins and dual eliminations," explains Jim Quinlan, the program coordinator for American Legion baseball. "It's what separates Legion baseball from other programs. The opportunity to play a lot of games and travel."

This diamond bash had much to do with the mystique that surrounds baseball perhaps like no other sport. Luminaries such as Bob Feller, the former strikeout king with the Cleveland Indians, and former U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley converged with baseball experts and historians who included authors, fans, players, and museum curators.

Feller, known as "Rapid Robert" in his playing days, sat at a table autographing baseballs for \$2 to \$4. He learned his pitching craft by hurling the horsehide at a backstop on the family farm near Van Meter, Iowa, 180 miles away. That raw mania paid off when the 17-year-old rookie posted 17 victories for the Cleveland Indians with the best smoke of his era. Feller whiffed 348 batters in his career, breaking Rube Waddell's strikeout record.

Decades later, Feller turned jovial at the Field of Dreams, where he showed an awed youngster how to throw the ball to his little brother.

Paul Scherman, from nearby Farley, Iowa, appeared in the movie as one of the reborn White Sox players who were tossed out of baseball for throwing the 1919 World Series. The part owner of a family construction company and state legislator belongs to a group called the Ghost Players that originated with the movie, and ten years later is going strong.

Wearing 1919 pinstripes and narrow-brimmed caps, they make Sunday appearances at the movie site, give

youth baseball clinics, present "The Greatest Show on Dirt" comedy routine, and play celebrity baseball/softball games. They entertained the U.S. military in Spain, Crete, Italy, Turkey and Germany in June.

As the tallest player in the celebrities vs. "ghosts" softball game, the dark-haired, good-natured Bradley stood out. The former New York Knick and current presidential candidate told of visiting Iowa long ago as a Little League tournament player. "I stepped off the base to pull up my socks and got tagged out by the hidden ball trick. Ever since, I've dreamed of coming back and winning one."

Pretty good campaign material for an Iowa Field of Dreams crowd?

Bradley followed it up by hitting a thunderous drive over the left fielder's head for a home run. □

Article design: Caron Morales



Marv Meiers, 49, a member of the Ghost Players, left, and Russell Shealy, 17-year-old second baseman for the Newberry, S. C., American Legion team, visit the cornfield where the movie "Field of Dreams" was shot.

## "Shoeless" Joe still controversial

**S**hoeless" Joe Jackson, best known as one of the infamous "Eight Men Out" in the 1919 World Series scandal between the Chicago White Sox and the Cincinnati Reds, may soon have his reputation restored. The U.S. Senate is considering a resolution to have Jackson included in the Baseball Hall of Fame from which he has been blacklisted since his alleged, though never conclusively proven, participation in the 1919 game fix.



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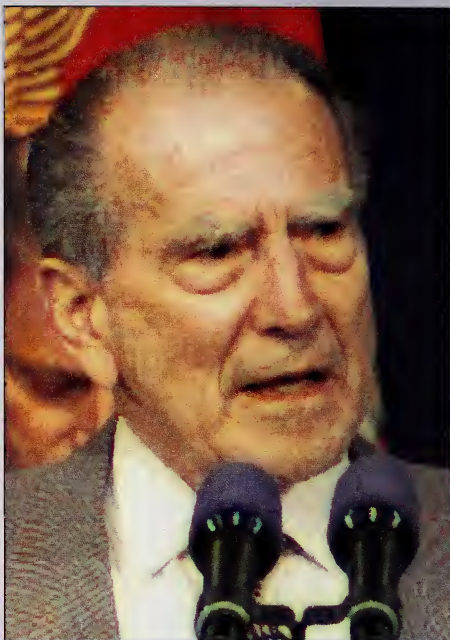
# Sticking to His Guns

**Retired Admiral stands  
behind his decision  
to use Agent Orange  
in Vietnam.**

**R**ETIRED Adm. Elmo Zumwalt Jr. didn't plan on a Navy career. The man who in 1970 became the youngest-ever Chief of Naval Operations came within two weeks of attending West Point. Swayed by a family friend's tales of seafaring adventure, Zumwalt instead went to the Naval Academy, graduating cum laude in 1942. Zumwalt, 79, is best remembered for supporting racial integration of the Navy, and for increasing the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. Zumwalt retired from the Navy in 1974 and is now involved with many humanitarian projects, including the National Marrow Donor Program, Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped and the Agent Orange Coordinating Council. He talked with *The American Legion Magazine* Assistant Editor Terry Coffey about his Navy years, and some of his post-retirement work.

**AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE:** In 1965, you became the youngest rear admiral in the Navy. In 1970 you became the youngest admiral. How did your relative youth affect your outlook and the job you did?

**ADM. ELMO ZUMWALT JR.:** When I became Chief of Naval Operations, I said I thought that compared to my predecessor, Admiral Moore, I had far less experience. But I thought an advantage was that, just nine years earlier, I had been in command of a ship. Therefore I was probably better able to relate to the problems and requirements of the younger generation of the Navy.



Adm. Elmo Zumwalt Jr. was chosen over 35 more senior officers to become Chief of Naval Operations in 1970.

**Q.** What was your toughest decision as a leader?

**A.** It was when I had to send people into battle instead of being with them. In World War II, I was with my men. In the Korean War, I was with my men. If my ship got hit, I was at risk along with them. In Vietnam, although I was in a helicopter every day visiting sites, I had to send boats and aircraft into battle. I couldn't be with them. That's much tougher.

**Q.** What led to your decision, in 1968, to order the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam?

**A.** As the new commander of U.S. Naval forces in Vietnam, I changed our strategy, taking small craft away from the coasts and major rivers, where we no longer had a problem, and putting them into the narrow rivers and canals along the Cambodian border. This stopped the infiltration of logistics by the Viet Cong from Cambodia, but we were taking casualties at the rate of 6 percent a month, which meant the average young man had a 70 percent probability of being killed or wounded during his one year tour. The Army had been using Agent Orange for three years. The Pentagon reported to us that the chemical companies had said there were no serious health effects on humans and animals. Faced with the terrible attrition, I had the Air Force spray the narrow rivers and canals along the Cambodian border and other areas where we operated, which reduced the casualties to less than 1 percent a month. There are many thousands alive and unaimed today because of this. The price we paid was that Agent Orange was carcinogenic, and



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has caused several hundreds of people to be seriously affected.

**Q.** Had you known this, would you have made the same decision?

**A.** Yes, I believe I would have had to, if we had no other defoliant, because we saved thousands at the expense of, later, hundreds. I've never bumped into any veterans, including our own son, who didn't say to me they were glad we defoliated.

**Q.** You mentioned your son (Elmo Zumwalt III), who died from cancer caused by exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. His son, your grandson, has learning disabilities due to that exposure. Did you discuss your decision a great deal with your son?

**A.** Yes, I did. It was his belief that he was alive 15 more years as the result of the use of Agent Orange. He thought that his volunteering for the dangerous missions he volunteered for would quite likely have led to death or wounding, had it not been for the defoliation.

**Q.** You participate in many humanitarian projects, including the effort to assist Vietnamese amputees from both sides of the war. Why do this – especially for some who were, at one time, your enemies on the battlefield?

**A.** When I was a young lieutenant, I had the thrill of spending a day with Gen. George Marshall, who had just finished his tenure as secretary of state. I remember saying to him, "General, you've done so many things and have had so many honors. Why do you continue to serve instead of enjoying your retirement?" He said, "Young man, when you end up commanding forces in war, you'll find you automatically inherit two lifetime obligations. One is to continue to look out for the men who fought under you, and the other is to help bind up the wounds with the former enemy, so we can get on with a prospering world."

**Q.** In recent years, the Navy has been rocked by scandals, including "Tailhook." To what would you attribute those problems?



Adm. Elmo Zumwalt Jr., Chief of Naval Operations, meets with two young men representing his home state of California during the annual visitation to the Department of Defense by the American Legion Boys Nation. The youths are David P. Morgan, left, of El Cerrito, and Howard H. Hallman, of Vista.

## Path of Excellence

- Nov. 20, 1920: Born San Francisco, Calif.
- 1942: Graduates from U.S. Naval Academy.
- Oct. 22, 1945: Marries Mouza Coutelais-du-Roché, 21 days after meeting her.
- July 30, 1948: First son, Elmo III, is born.
- 1959: Takes command of frigate USS Dewey, the Navy's first guided-missile ship.
- 1965: Becomes U.S. Navy's youngest rear admiral.
- 1968: Named commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Vietnam, orders Agent Orange to be sprayed along canals and rivers near the Vietnamese-Cambodian border.
- 1970: Becomes youngest admiral and Chief of Naval Operations.
- 1974: Retires from U.S. Navy.
- 1977: Elmo Zumwalt IV is born; his learning disabilities are blamed on his father's exposure to Agent Orange.
- 1983: Elmo Zumwalt III is diagnosed with cancer – also

- blamed on exposure to Agent Orange.
- 1986: *My Father, My Son*, the account of the Zumwalts' Vietnam experiences, is published.
- 1988: Elmo Zumwalt III dies of cancer.
- 1994: Zumwalt travels to South Vietnam for the first time since the war.



U.S. Navy photo

**A.** I think every generation has its own problems. On my watch, when we began to integrate the Navy after 200 years of racism, we had some problems as the increasing numbers of minority personnel began to come on board, and perceived no minorities in senior positions. One of my successors, Adm. Thomas Hayward, had difficulties with regard to personnel using drugs, and Adm. Frank Kelso had the problem with Tailhook. Military society reflects the young people who are brought in from each generation. Therefore, the problems that we have to deal with are reflective of the problems on the outside. The country was in the process of integrating racially when I was CNO. The country was dealing with the drug culture when the Navy had that problem under Adm. Hayward.

**Q.** How successfully has the Navy adapted to life after the Cold War?

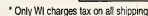
**A.** I think the Navy has successfully transitioned from a Cold War Navy to a Navy able to deal with conflicts in more than one place. The Tomahawk cruise missile, which we began developing on my watch, has made it possible to turn any surface ship or submarine into an offensive platform. That means you don't have to have an aircraft carrier in every theater. You can show the flag with an offensive capability with a wide variety of ships.

**Q.** What is the biggest threat facing America today?

**A.** Our combined military forces are not adequate for a two-war capability. They are forced to be greatly overextended, as a result of the frequent crises that we've had to deal with.

Article design: Mary Magee





# *Your Health: Living With* **Congestive Heart Failure**

*Heart disease is  
America's top killer.  
Fortunately, millions  
with congestive heart  
failure can fight back.*

**By Julie A. Rhoad**

**M**IKE STEPHENS did not want to become another statistic. The 52-year-old father of two could have died Dec. 29, 1998. "I sat up all night because I was in pain and couldn't breathe," he recalls. His family rushed him to the emergency room, where X-rays revealed Stephens suffered from congestive heart failure.

Stephens' diagnosis granted him admission into a fast growing segment of the population. Congestive heart failure is a disorder in which the heart fails to pump an adequate amount of blood to the body's other organs.

Plagued with diabetes, high cholesterol and high triglycerides, some might say Stephens fits the cliché of a heart attack waiting to happen. He has had two open-heart surgeries, one in 1991 and again in November 1998, but doctors have determined his heart is beyond repair. Now his only hope is a transplant.

Stephens suggests that if his heart disease had been detected earlier, he might not be in this predicament. High blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity are the major signs of the disease and, if caught early enough, it can be controlled.

**Higher Survival.** With 4.5 million Americans afflicted, congestive heart failure is reaching epidemic proportions, notes Dr. Ann Volger, associate professor of medicine at the University of California at San Francisco. She explains the reason for the epidemic is, in part, that the

medical industry is doing a good job fighting heart disease.

"Our medical therapies are so good for acute heart attacks that people no longer have the same high risk of dying," says Volger, the national spokesperson for the American Heart Association.

Some hope for early diagnosis might reside in a new study which indicates that a blood pressure measurement could forewarn who is at risk of heart failure. Researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital compared the difference between an elderly patients' upper (systolic) and lower (diastolic) blood pressure reading, and how it relates to congestive heart failure. A reading of 120/80 is nor-

verting Enzyme inhibitors help. These drugs allow blood to flow more freely by expanding blood vessels.

**New Treatments.** Beta blockers, too, have entered the ring to fight congestive heart failure. For years, beta blockers have been prescribed to lower blood pressure. Now they have been found to have a dramatic impact on heart-failure patients. Some beta blockers work by dilating blood vessels, which eases the heart's workload, increases circulation and therefore decreases mortality. Carvedilol is the only FDA-approved beta blocker for treatment of heart failure. Metoprolol,



*Mike Stephens discusses his options with his doctor.*

mal; 40 points separate the two readings. The four-year study discovered that patients with a reading higher than 67 points found themselves at a 55-percent greater risk of developing the disease.

Congestive heart failure can result from a variety of causes, including high blood pressure, cardiomyopathy, coronary artery disease, a past heart attack, congenital heart disease, or an infection of the heart itself. Both men and women develop congestive heart failure, but the incidence grows with age. A typical patient is age 70 and may have a history of high blood pressure or prior heart attacks.

Drugs such as Angiotensin Con-

one of the more frequently studied beta blockers, has also recently been found to help congestive heart failure patients and is expected to be approved for this use sometime in 2000. High blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity are major risk factors that can be treated today. "Unfortunately there are too many people out there who don't know they have a problem," warns Stephens. "The more they're made aware of it, the better off they'll be." □

*Julie A. Rhoad is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to this magazine.*

*Article design: Jon Reynolds*



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## Laser Attack Coverup?

**H**E CALLS IT a laser attack cover-up. And Navy Lt. Jack Daly has set up a Web site ([www.ltjack-daly.com](http://www.ltjack-daly.com)), where he expects to hear from other soldiers who have been injured by these weapons. The Pentagon admits Daly's eye injuries, which occurred in 1997 as he photographed a Russian spy ship, were consistent with a laser attack. However, it refuses to blame the Russians. The story is told in Bill Gertz' best seller, "Betrayal."

Daly says the cover-up of his injuries, which are permanent, is so extensive that he has been unable to get copies of his own medical records.

What's worse, the Russian spying continues. He says the spy ships, disguised as merchant vessels, continue to monitor our ballistic missile submarines operating out of U.S. ports in U.S. waters.

## A Hollywood Production

**I**T'S AN UNUSUAL COALITION. Outspoken commentator Army Col. David Hackworth (Ret.) has joined

with actor Paul Newman, broadcaster Ted Turner, and Ben Cohen, founder of Ben & Jerry's ice cream, to push for a 15-percent cut (or \$40 billion annually) in the defense budget.

Their campaign, launched three years ago by Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, is designed to shift federal funds into education, health and "the needs of children." They plan print, radio and television advertising and vow to "take the campaign to Congress in 2001."

## Presidential Secrets

**W**AS U.S. CONCERN about a ground war in Yugoslavia related to fear of Serbian chemical weapons and the knowledge that similar weapons were used by Iraq on our troops in the Gulf War?

This is the verdict of Patricia Axelrod, director of the Desert Storm Think Tank, who has studied the matter for eight years. "President Clinton now occupies the seat of the National Command Authority, which is that element of the presidency that is passed from president to president," she states. "So



Presumably, President Bush passed on the secrets of the Gulf War to President Clinton.

whatever President Bush knew or did in the Persian Gulf War is a secret that he passed on to President Clinton only."

Axelrod, a member of the California Reserve Officers Association Committee on Persian Gulf War Illness, says while the United States refuses to confirm Iraq's offensive use of chemical and/or biological weapons, the data confirm chemical agents on the battlefield which were either launched or brought to the battlefield. The biological agent anthrax was used selectively on our troops, she maintains.

## A War Close to Home

**W**HILE THE U.S. and NATO were preoccupied with a communist thug in the Balkans, communist narco-terrorists were taking control of Colombia in our own Western hemisphere. F. Andy Messing Jr., executive director of the National Defense Council Foundation, speculates a communist takeover could happen in a matter of months. "Colombia and our own hemisphere," he says, "are 100 times more important than Kosovo."

Messing, a retired Special Forces major, predicts that the Colombian government, which now controls only about one-third of the country, will be forced to call for special elections in which the guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the National Liberation Army, will compete and possibly win.

Meanwhile, just back from a trip to the region, where the Panama canal is scheduled to change hands at the end of the year, Capitol Hill staffer Al Santoli

reports members of the Colombian communist drug armies are showing up in Panama and being supplied by the Russian mafia and Chinese companies. Much has been written about Chinese control of the canal's strategic ports. But this is only part of the problem. Santoli, a Vietnam veteran who studies military history and strategy, reports, "The Chinese are moving in throughout Latin America," including in Cuba, where they have set up electronic eavesdropping operations at Lourdes, a traditional Soviet/Russian spy base. Santoli says this gives the Chinese the opportunity to practice cyber terrorism against the United States.

The ultimate target is Mexico, he says. "Mexico is a timebomb waiting to happen." If Mexico explodes, he predicts new waves of illegal immigrants and even terrorism on the border. This would be the time China decides to strike Taiwan or even the Philippines. "China does have a global strategy," he says. "We have no strategy."

— Cliff Kincaid

## The View From Israel

**W**HILE WASHINGTON and NATO saw Kosovo as a symbol of Serb oppression, a top Israeli journalist says European diplomats and defense experts have "privately and quietly" begun to take note of a deep Iranian connection to the conflict. Steve Rodan, a former staff correspondent for the *Jerusalem Post*, says Iran and other Islamic nations have funded and armed the Kosovo Liberation Army because they want to create a Muslim bloc of nations, including an independent Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia, throughout Europe.

What's worse, he says that Osama bin Laden, blamed for the terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa, has a working relationship with the KLA. If the KLA takes firm control in Kosovo, he warns bin Laden "can move his people, equipment and even his reported weapons of mass destruction throughout Central Europe."

— Cliff Kincaid



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## SHOULD THE UNITED STATES SEND FOOD AID TO NORTH KOREA?

**Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif.**



**NO** ON AUG. 31, 1998, North Korea's communist regime successfully fired an intercontinental ballistic missile over Japan and into the Pacific, covering a distance that threatens Hawaii and Alaska. During the test, Iranian technicians were present in North Korea, as part of Pyongyang's ongoing assistance to Tehran's nuclear weapons program. Internally, North Korea maintains a brutal gulag of a quarter-million political prisoners and their families. North Korea's largest state export items – besides international sales of missile and chemical weapons technology – are narcotics and counterfeit money.

All this considered, few Americans would fathom that the largest recipient of U.S. taxpayer-funded aid in the Asia-Pacific region – some \$220 million dollars in fiscal year 1998, with a similar amount requested by the Clinton administration for fiscal year 2000 – is none other than North Korea.

This coming year, U.S. delivery of roughly 500,000 tons of grain and 500,000 tons of fuel oil constitutes nearly half of the rogue state's heating oil and grain requirements.

Heavy fuel oil is delivered by the U.S. through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. This international program was developed under the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework, negotiated in hopes of ending North Korea's

**"North Korea's largest state export items – besides international sales of missile and chemical weapons technology – are narcotics and counterfeit money."**

nuclear weapons program. This effort is a stark failure. The international media reports massive North Korean military-related excavation in a mountain north of Pyongyang, related to construction of a nuclear facility. The farcical recent U.S. inspection of a single suspected underground site at Kumchang-ni allowed the North Koreans one year to move any weapons of mass destruction stored there to any of 12 other underground sites in North Korea that the United States does not have permission to inspect.

Our policy should not be to stabilize a dictatorial and militaristic regime. While mass starvation continues, North Korea wastes most of its resources deploying 1.1 million soldiers, the world's largest army per capita, who continue to threaten South Korea and the 37,000 American troops stationed there. U.S. aid permits diversion of local resources to repressive military and internal security forces. Under these circumstances, it is insane for the United States to provide any aid to the North Korean dictatorship.

**Rep. Tony Hall, D-Ohio**



**YES** AMERICA HAS a proud tradition of refusing to use food as a weapon against hungry people, no matter how wretched their leaders are. It is one of the moral underpinnings for our global leadership, but it is under increasing fire in the debate over our poli-

cies on the Korean Peninsula.

For half a century, the United States has committed enormous resources to securing peace in Korea. We now spend \$10 billion every year maintaining the deterrent represented by 37,000 troops serving there today. In the past three years, we also have added a few cents on each defense dollar for food and medicine aimed at providing relief to the young children and other vulnerable people of North Korea.

These carrots have been a valuable complement to our sticks. They are delivered not to North Korea's regime, but directly to those in need. And they have produced real results – for starving North Koreans, American troops who have not been faced with famine-induced instability and for South Koreans worried about their security.

I have heard nothing but strong support for humanitarian aid from Americans serving there. What they don't understand is the macho swaggering and threats to cut off food aid made by some members of Congress. Our side is winning; they tell me there is no reason to risk our hard-won progress.

North Koreans know they are in desperate trouble – anyone who sees teenagers that look like eight-year-olds knows that. But they don't complain. Instead, they show off their coping strategies: how twigs and cornstalks can be pressed into nutrition-free, but filling, noodles; how cotton balls are rinsed and reused in surgery; and how crops can be grown in every spare inch of soil.

Neither America's interests nor our integrity is served by a "let 'em starve" policy.

Dozens of churches and humanitarian relief organizations, with the help of the U.S. government, are doing right – by the innocent victims of North Korea's famine, by Americans stationed in the region and by the principles that our veterans have fought so hard to uphold.

**"North Koreans know they are in desperate trouble – anyone who sees teenagers that look like eight-year-olds knows that."**

### Your Opinions Count, Too.

Senators and representatives are interested in constitutive viewpoints. You may express your views by writing The Honorable (name), U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, or The Honorable (name), House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. You may call the Senate at (202) 224-3121; the House at (202) 225-3121.





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## Veterans' Retirement Home Deduction of \$1 Expected

WITH NAVY OPPOSITION waning, the mandatory Armed Forces Retirement Home payroll deduction from enlisted military members and warrant officers is expected to rise from 50 cents to \$1 when service members receive their anticipated 4.8 percent raise in basic pay Jan. 1.

"They're doing the best they can," says Mike Duggan, deputy director of The American Legion's National Security-Foreign Relations Division, of the program, which operates the U.S. Naval Home in Gulfport, Miss., and the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home in Washington, D.C. Duggan says that if funding shortfalls are not resolved, it may have to close by 2004.

Congress authorized the larger deduction in 1995, but Navy resistance kept Pentagon officials from implementing the change. Army and Air Force officials have supported the change.

An internal Navy memo deems the increase "not popular with a large segment of the Navy," but the Navy appears resigned to going along with the change, as it is making contingency plans to educate sailors about where their money goes and why.

The increase would cover two-thirds of the shortfall in operating funds. Together, the facilities lost \$8 million to \$12 million each year.

— Peter B. Rose



John Sherman saw combat in Europe during World War II and served two combat tours in Korea. He visits with one of the cats at the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home in Washington, D.C.

## VETS Program Gets Legion Stamp of Approval

DESPITE FUNDING constraints and major changes in the way the program is administered, The American Legion believes the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) continues to perform reasonably well - all things considered.

This assessment was provided by James B. Hubbard, director of The American Legion's National Economics Commission, as he offered testimony last month before the House of Representative's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation.

The VETS helps veterans, reservists and National Guard members in securing employment, training, and the rights and benefits associated with their military service."

As outlined in a related General Accounting Office report, the VETS staff monitors the operation of its two primary programs which provide employment and training assistance to veterans: the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER). The DVOP and LVER staffs, which are federally funded positions, are part of the states' employment service

systems and provide direct employment services to eligible veterans. The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) provides general direction, funding and oversight of the states' employment service systems, which, at the local level, are charged with offering or providing service to all veterans before nonveterans.

The 1999 VETS appropriation was approximately \$183 million, including \$80 million for DVOP specialists and \$77 million for the LVER staff that together make up close to 2,700 positions. Administration costs totaled \$24 million, and \$2 million went for the National Veterans' Training Institute.

**Budget Cuts.** Hubbard further reported that in the past six years, VETS has endeavored to reinvent itself within the confines of shrinking funds, while facing major changes to and consolidation within the Employment and Training Service (ETS).

VETS, with the advice of employers, veterans service organizations and others who have a stake in the program, has focused on a plan with three key goals:

- \* Help 300,000 veterans obtain

career employment,

- \* Ensure that of those 300,000, at least 10,000 are special disabled veterans, and

- \* Ensure that of the 300,000, at least 1,850 are homeless veterans.

The American Legion national economics director emphasized one factor that will make accomplishing these goals more difficult. Appropriations for the agency declined 11 percent and, as a result, the money available does not meet the amount provided by Title 38 United States Code.

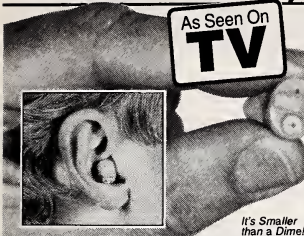
"Resources for the agency are at an all-time low point. The VETS budget remained essentially flat-lined for the past several years. As a result, the number of people providing direct services to veterans continues to decrease and training has suffered," he added.

The GAO report cited the lack of vision and clarity concerning what the program is to achieve and the direction it will take. The report goes further by knocking VETS' programs for not requiring information about the "quality of job placements ... or whether jobs are permanent."

— Peter B. Rose



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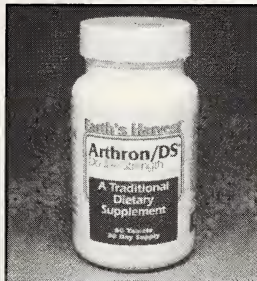
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## Boys Nation Sets Precedent of Singing in Court

THERE USUALLY isn't much singing in the Supreme Court. That is, unless you count the lawyers who have successfully argued their cases.

But on July 28, the sounds of singing echoed in the judiciary's halls, as the combined voices of the 96 members of the 1999 Boys Nation class belted out "Show your colors, America."

"No one is usually allowed to get that loud in that building," said Juan R. McCullum of Pearl, Miss. "To be able to sing in a place like this is incredible." The class set a precedent, and also got its point across that it cares about the American Flag.

McCullum and his fellow "senators" had just finished a morning learning about the workings of the Supreme Court and its role within the U.S. government. Their teacher was Boys State alumnus, William K. Suter, the Clerk of the U.S. Supreme Court.

It wasn't the first singing "thank-you" delivered by the group. Earlier in the day, Past National Commander "Sparky" Gierke, a judge on the U.S. Military Court of Appeals, got the same treatment after swearing in the Boys Nation president and vice president.

**White House Visit.** The singing continued in the afternoon when the group entertained President Clinton at the White House. Clinton told the combined groups from Boys and Girls Nation that what he remembered most from his 1963 Boys Nation experience, besides shaking the hand of then-President Kennedy, was the debate on the civil rights issue which had gripped the nation.

"I wonder if, 36 years from now, you will remember with such clarity what was going on in Washington with the clarity I remember 1963," Clinton said. "It was by no means certain Congress and the country would do the right thing on civil rights."

"President Kennedy, when he addressed the Boys Nation delegates, thanked us for our resolution on civil rights and bemoaned the fact the governors, who had just met the week before we did, could not reach an agreement. Thirty-six years later, it looks like the Boys Nation was right and the Governors Association was wrong."

Time will tell if the same is true from this year. The delegates, who are all to be high school seniors, debated different ways to deal with violence in schools. But most consider their top achievement the resolution asking the president to form a youth commission designed to give younger Americans a national voice.

"One of our delegates, Pettis Randall of Alabama, had helped getting a similar program together in his state," Boys Nation President Ryan Rippel said. "They estab-

lished a line of communication from the youth to the governor."

Rippel said they had been given much advice on how to frame their proposal from Frederick DuVal, an advisor to the president and a Boys Nation alumnus.

DuVal told them how things work in Washington. He advised them that if they tie their program to one adminis-



President Clinton waxes nostalgic about his term with Boys Nation President Ryan Rippel.

tration, it will be difficult to sustain. "But, by using existing programs like the annual Boys and Girls Nations, there's a chance it will live on," Rippel said.

Along with numerous meetings and legislative debates, the week was filled with trips to historic sights like the Flag House, Fort McHenry and Capitol Hill to visit with their senators. One evening was spent watching the Army's Old Guards perform a "Twilight Tattoo." Later, they were entertained at the Fort McNair Officers Club.

Even in the midst of the week's hectic schedule, Rippel thought the real benefit of the program won't be realized until the delegates return home. "In many ways we've been considered an apathetic generation," Rippel said in his inaugural address. "We must make a commitment to Americanism. We must take time to reach out to our peers, to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities as American citizens. Democracy is not only about elections and legislation, it's in relationships between individuals."

— Mark Faram



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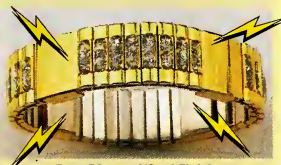
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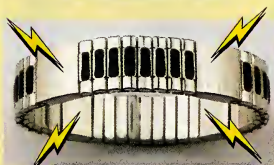
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## Player of the Year Shares Success with Father

NEW YORK CITY and Edwardsville, Ill., have something in common. Both are the home of World Series Champions. The New York Yankees swept the San Diego Padres to win the Major League World Series while Edwardsville beat Cherryville Post 100 from North Carolina to win The 1998 American Legion World Series.

However only one can claim to have the 1998 American Legion Baseball Player of the Year: Chad Opel, who plays



Chad Opel receives the Player of the Year plaque from Don Marr Jr., past president of the Hall of Fame.

baseball practically year-round, credits his parents with his success and is as humble as Cal Ripken Jr. "My parents got me going in baseball when I was in the second grade. They signed me up for Little League, and I have been playing baseball ever since," he says.

Now a sophomore at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Opel led all tournament players with a batting average of .632, eight doubles and 11 stolen bases. His batting average also earned him the Louisville Slugger Award.

Opel led Post 199 (41-7) to a World Series championship with a 9-4 victory over Post 100.

Winning the World

Series was twice as sweet for Opel since his father was an assistant coach with the team. "At times it was rough to have him in the dugout with me. He was always telling me what to do but his suggestions helped me out in the end," Opel says. "It was great to have him there when we won the World Series. He was the first one to congratulate me and give me a hug. I thanked him right then on the field for everything he had done for me," he adds.

The Edwardsville team and coaches traveled to New York last fall to see two Major League World Series games between the Yankees and Padres. Opel was honored during Hall of Fame ceremonies in Cooperstown, N.Y., for winning the George W. Rulon American Legion Player of the Year Award.

Opel, whose favorite Major League player is Wade Boggs of the Tampa Devil Rays, says that his true idols are those who played before him in high school. "I remember when I was in the seventh grade and I wanted to be just like my hometown heroes, Mark Little and Dave Slemmer, and the other guys who played high school baseball and American Legion Baseball," he says.

**Furture Major Leaguer?** Undecided as to what area of study he wishes to pursue, Opel hopes to one day play professional baseball. "I think anyone who loves baseball would want to one day play professional baseball," he adds.

Opel plays (second base) for the university's team along with former Edwardsville teammates centerfielder Dave Crouthers and catcher Todd Haug.

This summer Opel, who at the age of 19 is too old to play American Legion Baseball, is playing in the Central Illinois Collegiate League and was named to the All-Star team. He says playing American Legion Baseball has helped him as a player. "It showed me how baseball should be played," he says.

—Kristen Shupe

## Past National Commander Don Johnson passes away

MEMBERS OF The American Legion are mourning the passing of Past National Commander Donald E. Johnson of Iowa.

Johnson passed away unexpectedly Aug. 10 at Mary Washington Hospital in Fredericksburg, Va.

He served The American Legion as National Commander from 1964 to 1965 and had 55 years of continuous membership. A member of Post 514, Johnson also served the Legion in a variety of capacities including Department of Iowa Commander from 1952 to 1953, National Finance Chairman from 1955 to 1956, and National Overseas Graves Decoration Trust Committee Chairman from 1964 to 1965. He also served on many other committees.

A combat veteran with the 89th Infantry

Division in Europe during World War II, Johnson was nominated as VA Administrator by President Nixon in June of 1969. During his term, Johnson was aggressive in ensuring the VA assisted Vietnam veterans.

He later served as deputy assistant secretary at the Commerce Department, and was chief of staff to Sen. Roger W. Jepsen, R-Iowa, from 1983 to 1985. Johnson was also the executive director of the National Credit Union Administration in Washington from 1985 until his retirement in 1993.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Jean Johnson; 10 children; 16 grandchildren; and a great-grandson.

Condolences can be sent to Mrs. Jean Johnson, 11348 Savannah Drive, Fredericksburg, VA 22407-9109.



Past National Commander Donald E. Johnson



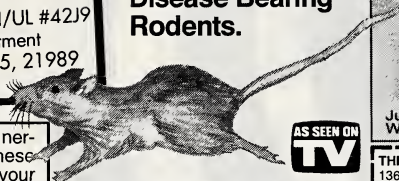
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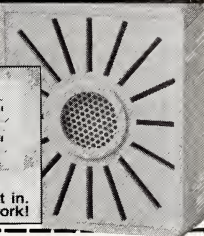
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## Departments Work with National to Develop New Members



Charlie Tyrian, aka "The World's Happiest Rhino," is assisted during his motivational program by Jean Wilson, Ohio's 4th District, First Vice Commander.

MORE THAN 400 representatives of the country's largest veterans' organization traveled to Indianapolis for the 36th Annual Membership Conference held July 29-31. The three-day get-together served as the initial phase of training for newly elected Department and District Legion officers.

"We want this to be a pleasurable experience, but we want you to go home thinking," greeted Kenneth Sercerchi, the National Membership Chairman.

"I need to dispel rumors," said Billy Johnson, the Legion's membership director. "You often hear that the way Vietnam veterans were treated after they came home from the war has turned them away from The American Legion — that other post-Vietnam War-era veterans just will not join. We have experienced just the opposite."

His numbers showed that membership stands at 2.75 million, with a decline of 44,213 members this year, 13,213 more than the year before. It is a trend that is troubling Johnson and one he believes needs everyone's attention as The Ameri-

can Legion enters the new millennium. "That's a huge untapped reservoir for potential Legion membership," he noted.

A brighter report was issued by the Sons of The American Legion which, for the 18th consecutive year, increased its national membership to an all-time high of 211,255. But hasn't the death of World War II veterans at an average of 1,000 per day seriously impaired The American Legion's chances of survival?

No, Billy Johnson emphatically replied.

"We lost 80,550 last year to deaths and signed up almost 100,000 new members through direct mail," he explained. "We don't use death as an excuse. Our problem is retention."

How about trying to recruit more women, whose numbers in the organization are not charted by the membership office, but have to be minute? There are, nevertheless, examples of new female Post Commanders.

"We have to focus on the vet as a vet,

not on their other characteristics," Johnson replies. "If you look at the military population, 42 to 43 percent of the NCOs are minorities. But in our attempts to retain and sign up new membership, we look at all vets the same way."

As a matter of fact, Johnson reported, 700,000 Legionnaires hail from the Vietnam era. Eighty percent of those signed up through the Post Revitalization Program and fall into the previous categories mentioned, he added.

**Gulf Vets.** Steve Smithson of the Board of Veterans Ap-

peals made a less sanguine report on Gulf War veterans. Only 51,616 of 3,473,061, or 1.89 percent, have joined the Legion.

"Our single most under-utilized resource is the national staff," says Herman Harrington, chairman of the Internal Affairs Commission. "All you have to have is a plan, and they'll help." Additional aid comes in several forms.

**Headquarters Staff.** So what kind of assistance is headquarters offering?

First of all, the headquarters staff itself. "Our single most under-utilized resource is the national staff," says Herman Harrington, chairman of the Internal Affairs Commission. "All you have to have is a plan, and they'll help." Additional aid comes in several forms.

According to Harrington, Association Information Manager, or AIM, is "one of the most sophisticated data systems in the country." Since October 1998, the software program that tracks memberships and labels your mail has been installed by 138 Posts and 25 Departments.

"Logging on" is another example. The American Legion offers a home page on the Internet and more than 1,000 pages of Internet American Legion information. In recent years, home page hits have increased from less than 10,000 to 21,000 a year, and new membership sign-ups on the Internet have jumped from 22 in 1996 to 828 this year.

The newly revived National Legion College "is training new leadership for eight, nine years down the road," according to John Querfeld, director of Internal Affairs. "We're getting the younger ages involved earlier on and bringing them along."

Advertising slicks and radio and TV spots have also helped and are available from Public Relations.

Whether it will mean employing what Past National Commander Butch Miller describes as "the lost skill of knocking on doors," or one of the newer technical methods, attendees at the conference headed home better equipped to accomplish their recruiting mission.

— Peter Rose



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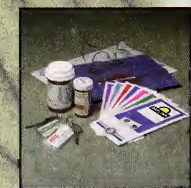
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746th ROB, C Co #20848; 756th FA Bn Assn (WWII/Korea) #16132; 790th FA Bn #10865; 815th Avn. Engr. Bn. (WWII) #16282; 841st Engr Avn Bn (WWII/Korea) #21784; 1019th Engr Treadway Bridge Co (WWII) #21927; 1377th Engr Petro Dist Co #20457; 3062nd QM Bakery Co, Mbl Spec #15556; 3102nd Sig. Serv. Bn. (China WWII) #22568; OCS Class, Apr 1964 (Ft Benning, GA) #23661; Schwaebisch Gmuend (Ger 57-65) #22392; US Constabulary Assn, Outpost 5 (WV/MO/IL/IN) #22535; X Corps (Korea, '50/53) #18781

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### MARINES

1st Mar, 1st Bn (VN 65-68) #19871; 1st Mar Div, 1st Rgt, 3rd Bn, 81 MM Mtr Plt (China, WWII) #19375; 1st Mar Div, 5th Rgt, 2nd Bn, Hq Co (69-70) #19156; 1st Mar Div, 5th Rgt, 2nd Bn, Weapons Co #22321; 1st Mar Div, 5th Rgt, 3rd Bn (WWII-60) #21618; 2nd/3rd Marines, H Co, 1st Pltn (66/67) #17116; 3rd Bn, 301st Pltn (Parris Island, Aug-Oct 68) #23697

3rd MAR Div, 9th Regt, 1st Bn (The Walking Dead) #23746; 3rd Mar Div, 9th Rgt, 3rd Bn, I Co (WWII) #10439; 4th Amtrac Bn (WWII) #17218; 5th Amphib. Corps, 11th 155 MM Gun Bn, FMF #14351; 5th Mar Div, 5th Amphib Corp, 155 MM Howitzer Bn (WWII, Leyte) #23805; 12th Mar Rgt, 4th Bn, K Btry (VN 65-69) #11220; 26th Rgt, 1st Bn, D Co #23229; Banana Fleet Marines (20-40) #17168

FMF-PAC Drum/Bugle Team, Hq Co (Camp Smith HI, All Yrs) #12206; HMM-261 Operation Nimbus Star #23702; Marine Security Guard Det, Saigon, Vietnam (1964-69) #23959; Montford Point Assn, Inc #17096; NAD Marine Barracks (Hawthorne, NV) #20288; Nat'l Marine Corps League #17131; NOMB, Gd Co, #1 Mar Bks, (Yorktown VA 51-53) #23952; USS Missouri BB-63 Marines #10343; VMB-413 (WWII) #21041; VMF/VMA-223 #12499; VMSB-343 #17232

### MISCELLANEOUS

6th Stat. Ctl. Unit (Maxwell Field, AL) #19849; Black Pearl Vets (Two Jims 45-68, APO 815, incl all services) #14911; Two Jims Veterans Reunion #17308; Office of Strategic Service, R&D Branch (WWII) #19797; Precision Measurement Equip. Lab School Grads #17250; USS/USCGC Glacier Assn (CA) #22604; Yokohama American High School (47-53) #21450

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Namur, 43-45) #18681; CBMU-1/MAG-33 (Incl  
Man) #19189; Iwo Jima Boat Crews (Higgins  
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16 #14719

LCI (L) 537/Omaha Beach LCIs #17320; LCT  
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266 #17589; LST-308 (WWII) #18340; LST-335  
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HI) #14363; NAS Cubi Point: FASRON-113/30 CB  
Rgt/Sqs (Civ/Officer/Enlisted 55-57) #14495

NAS Opalocka, Education Dept. (FL, 1944/46)  
#17642; Naval Magazine/Fuel Annex (Catalena,  
Spain) #23261; Nav. Repair Unit 135 (Sydney,  
Australia WWII) #17328; NTC Great Lakes: Boot  
Co 27 (38) #19310; NTC Sampson WWII Vets,  
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199 #10476; USS Mariano G. Vallejo (SSBN 658)  
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Menifee APA-202 (WWII/Korea) #11861; USS  
Micka DE-176 #18169; USS Montpelier CL-  
57/SSN-1765 (Nat Assn) #17788; USS Naos AK-  
105 #12019; USS Natoma Bay CVE-62 (Incl VC-  
63/81/9) #18440; USS Navarro APA-215  
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Oakland SL/AA/CL-95 #18774

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VC-94 (WWII) #17844; Vietnam Era Seabees (59-75) #21196; VP-201 #22986; VPB-118 (WWII) #21303; VR-2 NAS Alameda (MATS 1947-50) #13209; YMS-326 (WWII) #19118; YMS-461 (1944/Presen) #11745; YMS-52 #10127

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Anyone who served on the U.S.S. Reasoner in

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Anyone who served in the Administrative Command (Personnel) at NTC Bainbridge, Md, between Jan. 1951 and Jan. 1953. Contact: William P. Robertson III, RR1, Box 11, Blackwoods Rd., Franklin, ME 04634, tel. (207)565-2901

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Anyone in U.S. Navy in San Diego, 1940, who knew William Peck. Contact Al Eichler, 406 E. 19 St., Costa Mesa, CA 92627; tel. (949) 548-6748.

Anyone who served in AACs, AFCS, or AFCC. Contact Carroll Johnson, 10300 California Ave., Wolcott, NY, 14590-9235.

Anyone who served with Harville Gibson in the Marines, 1942-1946. Contact Carolyn Sparks, P.O. Box 312288, New Braunfels, TX 78131.

## TAPS

Gabriel A. Alfano, NY Dept. Conv. Chmn. (1998-1999), Natl. Econ. Comm. (1997-1999)

Archie Heathington, Texas, Dept. Cmdr. (1989-90), Dept. Publs. Chmn. (1997), Dept. P.R. Chmn. (1997), Dept. Sec. Chmn. (1986-87), Natl. Amer. Cncl. V-Chmn. (1993-99), Natl. Dist. Gst. Comm. V-Chmn. (1985-90).

Donald Edward Johnson, Iowa, Dept. Amer. Chmn. (1951-1952), Dept. Cmdr. (1952-1953), Natl. Trophies, Awd. & Cerem. Chmn. (1953-1955), Natl. Trophies, Awd. & Cerem. Cmte. Mem. (1955-1956), Natl. Exec. Cmte. Alt. (1955-1957), Dept. Fin. Chmn. (1955-1956), Natl. Exec. Cmte. Mem. (1957-1961), Natl. PR Comm. Lsn. Cmte. Mem. (1957-1958), Natl. Sec. Comm. Lsn. Cmte. mem. (1958-1961), Natl. Reorg. Cmte. Mem. (1960-1961), Natl. Cntr-Subsv. Activities Cmte. Mem. (1961-1962), Natl. PR Comm. Mem. (1961-1964), Natl. Cmdr. (1964-1965), Natl. Fin. Comm. Ex-Officio Mem. (1964-1965), Natl. Adv. Cmte. to the Natl. Cmdr. Chmn. (1965-1966), Natl. Overseas Grave Dec. Trust Cmte. Vice Chmn. (1965-1966), Natl. PR Comm. Lsn. Cmte. Chmn. (1965-1966), Natl. Overseas Grave Dec. Trust Cmte. Mem. (1966-1967), Natl. Cmdr. Advisory Cmte. Vice Chmn. (1966-1968), Natl. 50th Anniv. Cmte. Vice Chmn. (1966-1969), Natl. 50th Anniv. Cmte. Exec. Sect. Mem. (1966-1969), Natl. 50th Anniv. Cmte. Perm. Subcomm. Chmn. (1966-1968), Natl. Advisory Cmte. to the Natl. Cmdr. Ex-Officio Mem. (1967-1969), Natl. Advisory Cmte. on Ed. & Schlshp. Mem. (1969-1974), Natl. Legis. Cncl. Mem. (1979-1984), 1985-1990, 1993-1994, Natl. 75th Anniv. Cmte. Chmn. (1992-1994).

Bernard F. McCluskey Jr. Mass., Natl. Vets Pref. Comm. (1983-84); Dept. Hist. (1986-87); Dept V-Cmdr. (1987-90); Dept. Cmdr. (1990-91); Dept. Conv. Comm. Chmn. (1990-91), Natl. Sec. Cncl. V-Chmn. (1990-92); Natl. Econ. Comm. (1992), Natl. Legis. Cncl. (1999).

Alfredo M. Ortiz, N.M. Dept. Vets. Pref. Chmn. (1950-1951), Dept. Radio Chmn. (1953-1954), Natl. Boys St. Cmte. Mem. (1958-1961), Dept. Cmdr. (1960), Dept. Boys St. Chmn. (1960-1969, 1970-1984), Natl. Amcnsn. Cncl. V. Chmn. (1967-1976), Natl. Leg. Cmsn. V. Chmn. (1975-1976), Natl. Legis. Cmsn. Mem. (1976-1999), Dept. Leg. Chmn. (1993-1995), Dept. Boys St. Chmn. (1994-1997).

T. Paxton Stephens Jr. La., Natl. Law & Order Cmte. Gen. Mem. (1946-1947), Dept. Amer. Chmn. (1947-1948), Natl. Rehab. Insurance Adv. Bd. Mem. (1948-1949), Dept. Cmdr. (1949-1950), Natl. Boys St. Cmte. Mem. (1950-1951), Natl. Rehab. Com. Area C Gen. Mem.

(1951-1954), Natl. Cntr-Subsv. Activ. Cmte. Exec. Sec. (1954-1956), Natl. Cntr-Subsv. Activ. Cmte. Vice. Chmn. (1954-1956), Natl. Am. Leg. Endwmt. Fund Corp Mem. (1956-1957), Natl. Conv. Comm. Mem. (1969-1972), Dept. Conv. Chmn. (1971-1973, 1976-1977, 1978-1979), Natl. Legis. Comm. Mem. (1973-1979), Natl. Mem. & Post. Activ. Cmte. Gen. Mem. (1973-1974), Natl. Amer. Cncl. V. Chmn. (1979-1982), Natl. Dist. Guests Cmte. V. Chmn. (1982-1987).

Robert P. Walsh, Texas, Natl. M&PA Comm. (1956-61, 63-64, 66-70), Natl. Vets Pref. Comm. (1961-

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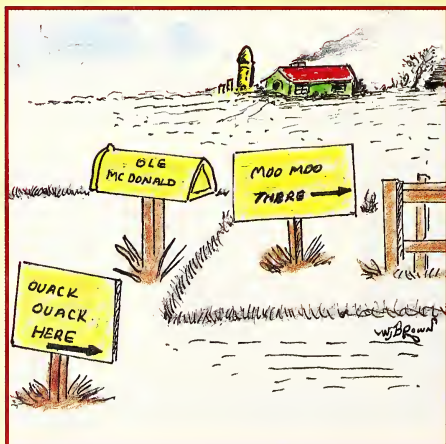
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